

## Reactions to Brexit on Flickr: a multimodal content analysis

On 23 June 2016, Britain voted to leave the European Union, which led to the greatest political crisis since World War Two, also known as the *Brexit* (White 2016).

In this context, our research question is the following: After the Brexit announcement, what were the images which citizens posted on social media to share their feelings and opinions? Our corpus is based on images posted and shared in different European languages (English, French, Italian, German and Spanish). With such an international corpus, we seek to identify possible differences between national practices, in order to analyse the different approaches to European identity, intensified in such political watershed moments.

### Methodology

We aim to analyse over 5000 messages posted on Flickr between 23.06.16 and 23.07.16, that contain images, gathered under the international hashtag #brexit. We decided not to use hashtags such as #UKIP or #LeaveEU, as they are mostly exclusively used in Great Britain. We will focus on tweets posted by *lambda* civilians and have, as such, decided to exclude tweets by experts, journalists or politicians.

Our work is a content analysis based on a grounded theory approach. We aim to classify the images into three types of categories: Firstly, we will see how our dataset responds to the claims developed during the campaign. Stevens and Banducci (in Jackson 2016 : 22) identified two claims made by the Leave and Remain camps during the campaign. "First, there were arguments that reflected fundamental values and revealed differences in visions for the UK. These were about regaining sovereignty or maintaining a shared destiny and security within Europe. A second type of claim rested on dystopian visions of remaining (unbridled immigration for the Leave side) or leaving (economic devastation by the Remain side)."

Secondly, beyond the topic of the post as such, we aim to frame the dataset according to two frames that reflect the tone of the post:

- Which performative functions are fulfilled by the post? Fact, opinion, and/or emotion? (Seo 2014)
- Are the posts embedded in personal stories or not? (Papacharissi 2015)

Thirdly, additional categories will undoubtedly emerge from the corpus, as this study is merely exploratory for the most part. One hypothesis that we would like to verify is whether these shared images show an approach to European identity that is based on nation states, in which national points of view are up against each other, or on Europe as a collective community, beyond national stances.

Multimodality is a key concept in our work (Jewitt 2014, Rose 2016) : the images will not be considered as separate entities but as part of posts, which means that the comments that accompany the images will be analysed with discourse analysis tools. Our research will be qualitative and manual, without automatic image annotations.

### Works cited

Banducci, S. and Stevens, D. (2016). Myth versus fact: are we living in a post-factual democracy? In Jackson, D., Thorsen, E. and Wrin, D. (eds). EU Referendum Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign. Early reflections from leading UK academics. Poole: Centre for the Study of Journalism, Culture and Community, 22.

Jewitt, C. (2014). *The Routledge handbook of multimodal analysis*. London, Routledge (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

Papacharissi, Z. (2015). Affective publics and structures of storytelling: sentiments, events and mediality. *Information, Communication & Society* 19(3), 307-324.

Rose, G. (2016). *Visual methodologies*. London, Sage (4<sup>th</sup> ed.).

Seo, H. (2014). Visual propaganda in the age of social media. An Empirical Analysis of Twitter Images During the 2012 Israeli– Hamas Conflict. *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 21(3), 150-161.

White, Michael. (26.06.16). EU referendum and Brexit, Michael White's political briefing. *The Guardian*.

respond to the Leave parties' « demonisation of the EU (which) lent itself to a negative pathos » (Martin in Jackson 2016 : 21),



**Damon** @damocrat · Sep 16

Ahh, the good old days before the #EU. #Brexit will take us back there! No more stupid bloody recycling! Hurrah! 🇬🇧



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To: Catherine Bouko

## Your panel contribution at the 15<sup>th</sup> International Pragmatics Conference, Belfast, 16-21 July 2017

Dear Colleague,

It is my pleasure to inform you that your paper

*Reactions to the Brexit on Facebook and Twitter: a multimodal content analysis of shared images, in search of European identities*

by Catherine Bouko

has been accepted for presentation in the panel

*Mediatizing affect in digital stories of global events and crises*

organized by Giaxoglou Korina (et al)

during the 15<sup>th</sup> International Pragmatics Conference, Belfast, Northern Ireland, 16-21 July 2017.

Please take into account, when planning your conference participation, that the panel is planned for **Monday**. The complete panel schedule can be found on the [conference website](#).

There is nothing you need to do at this moment. But keep in mind the following future steps:

- In April you will be asked to edit your paper abstract to make sure it fits the definitive form of your presentation. You will be asked to do this online, and we'll give you editing access for that purpose.
- As a paper presenter you are expected to register for the conference. [Registration](#) is now open. But you have time to register until 30 April 2017.

Do not forget to share this message with your co-authors, if any, as they will not receive it directly.

Looking forward to seeing you in Belfast,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Bouko', written in a cursive style.